1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8

888 ing to Ribeiro[277] the starving Rąmkõ'kamekra, succumbing to the smallpox and pursued by Neobrazilians, killed their sick:

Qualquer dos que enfermava durante suas marchas, deitava-se no chão pondo por cabeceira uma pedra, e punham-lhe então os amigos e parentes outra grande pedra na cabeça com a qual lh'a esmagavam, e o deixavam alli descansando e livre das suas dores: este fim teve o maioral Tempé com todos os outros gentios seus mais notaveis collegas.

(Whoever fell sick on their marches lay down on the ground with a rock for a headrest, then his friends or relatives took another large rock with which they smashed his head, letting him rest there free from his pains. This was the end of Chief Tempé [error? cf. p. 32 f.] and all the other Indians who were his foremost companions.)

[134]

However, this took place in a situation more desperate than any known to the tribe before or after, hence does not prove the customary killing of the sick. Another case cited by Ribeiro[278] relates to the Gamella of Vianna, hence is irrelevant.

888 Snethlage quotes a tale heard "von einem durchaus zuverlässigen Farmbesitzer" to the effect that one day a Rąmkõ'kamekra left his work to go home and kill his 114 father, who was too weak to remain alive. The story seems hardly credible; even if the intention was a reality, the Indian is not likely to have ostentatiously informed his Neobrazilian employer of it.[279]

Snake Shamans

755 Kwųikõ', a man of about forty-five, has the reputation of having special relations 756 with snakes, communicating with them clandestinely, and owning remedies against snake bites. He is generally regarded with fear and mistrust. People may not seek his friendship, but at least they try not to incur his enmity; the majority, I believe, would be afraid to deny him a request lest he take it in ill part and send a poisonous snake to meet them. Kwųikõ' rather unscrupulously exploits this attitude, imposing on his tribesmen all sorts of transactions with him that always result to their disadvantage. Though for a long time aware that he neither keeps a promise nor sticks to a bargain, they lack the courage to refuse doing business with him.

123 He applied the same technique to me on learning of my interest in his knowledge, 756 offering me in exchange an object he did not possess, demanding prior payment, which he received, and then regarding the matter as settled. When I demanded the return of the payment, he obeyed without protest, smiling his peculiar sweetish smile. Kentapí, who had urgently tried to dissuade me, was most upset by my procedure: Kwųikõ' was sure to take revenge; and when I said that was precisely what I should like to see, she added that if he failed he would take it out on her. Because of his sneaky conduct and unscrupulous mendacity I was unable to learn details as to his intercourse with the venomous snakes.

755 During my stay I saw him professionally active on only three occasions. The first time he called me to witness the act. A fortnight before my arrival a snake had bitten an Indian in the leg. He was seated on a racing log behind the house, with his leg extended. Kwųikõ' knelt before him and sucked out of the injured spot, which was still swollen, the "snake poison" still inside. A boy of about ten, the shaman's disciple, was standing beside him. After a while he rose, expectorated the "poison" into his hand, and put it into his pupil's mouth to be swallowed. The boy obviously had a horror of it and after several unsuccessful efforts he pushed the "poison" out of his mouth with his tongue. I forestalled the shaman by immediately removing it from his lips and at once recognized it as a bit of pink paper [123] such as I was using to write on.

[277] Ribeiro, Memoria, § 60. [278] *Ibid.*, § 24. [279] Snethlage, Nordostbras. Ind., 186.